

Brazil's Fernando Rufino de Paulo was sure to turn heads in Tokyo with his eye-catching hair styles but it would be on the water where he was likely to make his greatest statement. On Saturday he won the men's KL2 final to go with the VL2 he won 24 hours earlier.

New Zealand's Corbin Hart, at just his first international paracanoe regatta, was off to his first Paralympic Games after successfully qualifying in the men's KL3.

'It's been quick, hard, fast; it's been amazing,' Hart said.

'I just can't thank my team at home enough. I just can't wait to see what the next three months brings for me.

'There's only a few people in the world who can say they've been to a Paralympics. I'm proud of myself; it's pretty cool for a 16 month turnaround.'

Others to qualify for Tokyo on Sunday included Kamila Kubas in the women's KL2 and Japan's Yoshimi Kaji in the women's KL3.

Six countries were set to make their paracanoe Paralympics debut following confirmation of the final quota allocations for this year's Tokyo Games.

With 100 days to go to the start of this year's Paralympics, the ICF could confirm Russia, Belarus, India, Kazakhstan, Portugal and Uzbekistan were first time countries in a list of 28 nations set to compete in Japan.

There were 26 countries competing when paracanoe made its first appearance at a Paralympics in Rio

There had been 90 quotas issued for Tokyo, an increase from 60 when paracanoe made its Paralympic debut in Rio in 2016. There would be three new events in Japan, with two va'a races for men and one va'a for women.

Great Britain was the most successful nation in Rio with five medals and would have the biggest team in Tokyo after qualifying eight boats. Russia would have seven boats on its Paralympic debut, the same as Brazil, while Hungary and host nation Japan would have six each.

'With 100 days to go the excitement is really building ahead of this year's Tokyo Paralympics,' ICF paracanoe committee chairman John Edwards said.

'We have just completed a very successful and very exciting final qualifying event in Hungary and the excitement on the faces of those athletes who were able to secure quotas for Tokyo really brought home how important these Games are.

'Paracanoe athletes like everyone else have really struggled during the covid pandemic so to now finally have a light at the end of the tunnel has lifted a lot of spirits and to see new countries ready to experience competition on the world stage is a great thrill for our sport.'

Eleonora de Paolis qualified a boat for Italy in the women's KL1 on Saturday. The sense of relief was palpable as she sat in her boat at the dock, contemplating what she had achieved after a challenging 12 months.

'Now I can finally say I'm going to Tokyo,' de Paolis said.

'I want to cry but I prefer I do it in my room or with my family and friends.

'The past year has been difficult; the lockdown in Italy was for several months so I could not get in the boat very much but now it is all worth it.'

David Phillipson was set to compete at this fourth Paralympics but his first in paracanoe after not only securing a Tokyo quota on Saturday but winning a raceoff against teammate Nicholas Beighton for team selection.

'This is the biggest achievement of my life,' Phillipson said.

'I've been to three Games playing tennis and I never won a medal and I believe I can win a medal in this sport. So to make it now, to get that spot, I'm chuffed to bits now.'

Germany sent out a pre Olympic warning to fellow competitors on Sunday with a dominant display of canoe sprint paddling on the final day.

Veteran Max Hoff shed tears of joy after he finally confirmed he will be attending his fourth Olympics while three time gold medallist Sebastian Brendel also locked away his ticket to Tokyo and his third Games.

Germany also won the women's K4 500 but suffered a rare defeat in the men's K4 500, losing to the powerful Spanish crew.

In other Olympic events there were wins for Slovenia's Milica Novakovic in the women's K1 500 and for Ukraine's Liudmyla Luzan and Anastasiia Chetverikova in the women's C2 500.

The most emotional win for the day was in the men's K2 1,000 where Hoff and Jacob Schopf were racing against teammates Jakob Kurschat and Jakob Thorsden for the right to represent Germany at the Tokyo Olympics.

After trailing for most of the race, Hoff and Schopf took control in the final 100 metres.

The 38 year old Hoff said the win was an enormous relief after a year when he heard people saying he was too old to go to another Olympics.

'I can't describe how I feel. I have had so much pressure this year,' Hoff said.

'It didn't work out very well until now. It was such a hard race. I'm so happy to make it to Tokyo. Inside it has really been a challenge for me. I'm so happy to join with my girlfriend who has qualified in rowing. I'm so thankful for everyone who has helped me out.'

Teammate Sebastian Brendel was another whom some had written off after a difficult 2019 season but the 33 year old teamed up with Tim Hecker in their first international race to win the C2 1,000 and also winning German selection to Tokyo.

'I had a tough 2019; now I'm back with a new C2 partner, a new coach and all that hard work has paid off,' Brendel said.

'There are some hard weeks to go. This will be very different. I'm happy I made two normal Olympics but for us it was very important that these Games happened. We had an extra year and it has worked well for us.'

The makeup off the German women's K4 500 for Tokyo was still to be decided but Sunday's crew of Sabrina Hering-Pradler, Melanie Gebhardt, Jule Marie Hake and Tina Dietze submitted a solid performance in Szeged.

'The whole team is very strong at the moment but hopefully you will see us in Tokyo,' Hake said.

'We feel pretty comfortable. I think we have a very good combination; it's very calm and we are motivating each other.'

The battle between Spain and Germany in the men's K4 500 has been intense since the Rio Olympics and on Sunday it was the Spanish crew of Saul Craviotto, Marcus Walz, Carlos Arevalo and Rodrigo Germade who took the win.

'We're so happy to start our competitions again after a year without competing,' Walz said.

'We know the Germans are going to be very strong in Tokyo, not only the Germans because we know there are going to be a lot of strong countries in Tokyo but mentally its great to be with them and to get the gold.'

Serbia's Milica Novakovic is another who earned team selection for Tokyo in Szeged and said it took a lot of pressure off her in the women's K1 500 final.

'This is what we are living for. I felt no pressure because once I got into the final I knew I was going to Tokyo for Serbia so I just wanted to race for my soul,' Novakovic said.

'Before the race I told myself this would be practice for Tokyo and to do my best and enjoy it. I certainly hope I will be in a fight for the medals at the Olympics.'

Luzan and Chetverikova confirmed their medal prospects in the women's C2 500 with an impressive performance on Sunday.

'This was a very hard race for us but we are ready to go to Tokyo and win,' Chetverikova said.

'Our Ukrainian team is very happy at the moment.'

ICF

200m: K1W: 1 E Jorgensen, Danmark, 41.10. 2 M Walczkiewicz, Polska, 41.73.

3 D Kerr, GB, 41.80. 12 E Lewis, GB.

K1WOQ: 1 D Kerr, GB, 42.23. 2 F Genzo, Italia, 43.11. 3 N Podolskaia, Rossija, 43.29.

K1WL3: 1 L Sugar, GB, 48.11. 2 N Barbosa, France, 50.34. 3 K Kozikowska, Polska, 51.37.

K1M: 1 L Heath, GB, 35.68. 2 S Totka, Magyarorszag, 35.71. 3 M Rizza, Italia, 35.74.

K1ML3: 1 S Yemelianov, Ukraina, 40.44. 2 A Voronkov, Rossija, 41.59. 3 R Oliver, GB, 42.39.

K1ML2: 1 F Rufino de Paulo, Brasil, 44.22. 2 M Syniuk, Ukraina, 44.43. 3 D Phillipson, GB, 44.88.

6 N Beighton, GB, 46.69.

C1W: 1 N Harrison, USA, 47.59. 2 Y Cirilo Duboys, Cuba, 47.88. 3 L Luzan, Ukraina, 47.91.

9 K Reid, GB, 50.26.

C1WOQ: 1 M Carbera, Espana, 49.65. 2 M Kerdikashvili, Georgia, 50.01. 3 K Reid, GB, 50.80.

V1ML3: 1 A Mosquera, Espana, 52.53. 2 J Eyers, GB, 52.54. 3 E Potdevin, France, 52.63.

V1ML2: 1 H Rivero, Espana, 57.43. 2 S Haxton, USA, 57.68. 3 M St-Pierre, Canada, 58.70.

C2W: 1 Andreeva/Romasenko, Rossija, 45.23. 2 Jacome/Otero, Espana, 46.03.

3 Luzan/Chetverikova, Ukraina, 46.29.

500m: K1W: 1 M Novakovic, Srbija, 1:56.67. 2 M Povkh, Ukraina, 1:56.86.

3 A Pulawska, Polska, 1:57.31. 9 D Kerr, GB.

C2W: 1 Luzan/Chetverikova, Ukraina, 2:00.72. 2 Balla/Takacs, Magyarorszag, 2:02.07.

3 Jahn/Koch, Deutschland, 2:03.31.

C2WOQ: 1 Cociu/Olarasu, Moldova, 2:04.93. 2 Kurach/Kniazeva, Rossija, 2:05.88.

3 Cattelot/Dorange, France, 2:07.00. 7 Bracewell/Fitzhenry, GB, 2:14.50.

1km: K1M: 1 J Schopf, Deutschland, 3:36.94. 2 J Dostal, Ceska, 3:37.50.

3 F Pimenta, Portugal, 3:38.94. 14 T Lusty, GB.